



Sailing in Turbulent Waters: How to Have Positive Conflict Resolution Handout

Resolving conflict is something we all must do at times. People tend to avoid conflict and see it as negative. Conflict can be positive. Conflict can make a relationship strong if you manage it well. There are skills that will help you have positive conflict resolution. Read the list below. Try some of the ideas and add some of your own.

Positive Communication Strategies

- Start with a positive attitude. When sharing a complaint approach the person gently. Try not to assume the other person had bad intentions.
- Have some basic rules set. Agree to take a break if needed. Talking while angry is not productive.
- Find areas you agree on. Having some common ground makes it easier to open up. Find a way to compromise.
- Control the setting. Choose a calm or public place. Pick a good time to talk.
- Talk about each person's childhood to understand them better.
- Use family meetings to show how to have fair discussions. Set basic rules and make sure each person is heard.
- Use humor to lighten a discussion that is getting too intense.

Self-check list:

- How well am I really listening? Am I planning my response while they are talking? Stop and listen. Am I trying to understand from their point of view?
- Am I using "I" statements? For example, "I felt hurt when you said that" rather than "You hurt me when you said that."
- Do I know what each person feels and needs from this discussion?
- Am I using open questions, to encourage sharing more? For example, "Can you explain this more?" Closed questions only invite a one-word answer, yes or no.
- Do I notice and tell others when they do something right? Reinforce strengths so when conflict occurs you have a positive bond to build on.



- Can I use humor to get the discussion back on a positive track?
- Can I recognize when emotions are too intense? It may be time to calm down before continuing the discussion.
- Do I know my triggers, the things that stir up negative emotions? Can I plan how to manage these, so I don't always react poorly?
- Am I being respectful? Is this talk bringing us closer?
- Can we work this out ourselves or do we need outside help?

Communication is a skill that you can improve. Try any of these tips to bring you better results. Social Workers are on hand at the Caregiver Support Line if you want to discuss this more. The number is 1-855-260-3274, Monday-Friday 8:00am-8:00pm EST.

Resource List

- Veteran's Crisis Line: 1-800-723-8255, press 1
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE
- Vet Centers: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/> , Click: "Search for" then select: Vet Center, then click "Search"
- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Coordinator: call your VAMC, ask Operator "0"
- Strength at Home (SAH): A VA program for couples in violent relationships. Ask your VA Primary Care Team Social Worker
- Warrior to Soulmate Program (W2SM): This is a VA program that supports couples. Ask your VA Primary Care Team Social Worker.
- VA Behavioral Health: Contact Mental Health at your VAMC for support.
- VA App Store: Provides Apps to aid wellbeing. AIM, Stair Coach, Mindfulness